

A brief personal history...

From 1966 – 1972 I studied physics at the Technical University at Darmstadt, finished with the „Diplom-Physiker“ degree, with specialization in low temperature solid state spectroscopy. In my fourth year I participated in the Nobel Prize Winner Meeting at Lindau – quite an inspiration! Thus I decided to spend the year after graduation abroad. I applied and was granted a fellowship by the German Research Foundation (DFG) to do research at the University of Toronto in Canada.

At that time my supervisor, Geoffrey Ozin, was one of the whizz kids of the department and had already gained a name as one of the pioneers in matrix isolation spectroscopy. It was a small research group, with lots of freedom to learn and develop. Within a few months I had my first publications – and a new field of my own. My German grant got extended to another year – and in this time I finished my studies and wrote a Master thesis in Inorganic Chemistry (4 publications).

Geoff offered me the possibility to get a PhD in his group. Not really realizing what this includes in the UofT Graduate School system I accepted – it took me five years to finally graduate in Physical Chemistry! But in the process I produced another 16 publications and wrote the “Bible” for the new field of “naked” bimetal atom chemistry.

In my last year I got the offer to establish as postdoc a new matrix isolation spectroscopy group at the Institute for Radiation Chemistry (attached to the Max Planck Institute) in Mulheim (Germany). Two weeks after graduation I joined - fortunately after two years this became a permanent position with Group Leader status. Soon the Institute changed its status to an independent Max Planck Institute, first for Radiation Chemistry, and in 2003 for Bioinorganic Chemistry. During this time the research directions in my lab increased considerably – and shrunk again. But still I could add another 30 publications – and I still have to write a dozen more!

“A physicist can everything – including Chancellor” is a standing joke in Germany. In my case it meant that the small organization talent I have was recognized by my director – and he charged me with all those tasks he could delegate. From 1999 – 2011 I served as Assistant to the Managing Directors – while still running my lab on a much smaller scale. It sure was a challenge for quite a number of young apprentices in their second year to do experiments normally done by graduate students!

Besides being the Public Relations Officer for the Institute (including setting up and maintaining our website) I was deeply involved in acquiring third party funding, especially from the programs of the European Commission. This started out as project funding for my own lab, increased to project coordinator, and climaxed with being picked as evaluator for the Framework Programs and INTAS. Along the way I established (and got funded) independent research cooperations with groups in Russia, Ukraine, South Africa, Japan and Hungary.

In August 2011 I officially retired, but was recalled for a year to continue part-time my administrative duties until my successors were found. Not to waste my experiences (e.g. I had established and was Speaker of the “institutional EU experts” of the Max Planck Society) I set up a one-man-consulting company to assist colleagues with their European project applications. This I do in form of lectures and day-long seminars at universities, clinics and for industrial organizations, by personal assistance with Marie Curie, ERC and other Horizon 2020 applications, by doing "pre-evaluations" as well as assistance with project management.